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SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR AF/W ASHLEY STEWART
LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [MASS](#) [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [BN](#)
SUBJECT: BENIN: BELGIAN MILITARY COOPERATION REDUCED

¶1. (U) Poloff met Belgian military attache Georges Reinders on November 17 to discuss recent reports that Belgium is ending military cooperation with the Beninese Armed Forces. He explained that a new government came to power in Brussels in January 2009, and a new chief of defense was named on April 2. At that time, the Belgians informed the Beninese that they would be reducing their financial and material support for peacekeeping operations by June ¶2010.

¶2. (SBU) Currently the Belgian military provides significant equipment to Beninese PKO forces in DR Congo and Cote d'Ivoire. Equipment that was given or sold is not in question. However, much equipment is on loan. Col. Reinders said that Belgium is hoping to sell the equipment to Benin, but admitted that since they are likely to give the Beninese most of the used equipment, the Beninese are unlikely to pay for the remaining material.

¶3. (SBU) Col. Reinders said that the most difficult issue is .50 caliber machine guns mounted on M113 armored personnel vehicles on loan to Beninese peacekeepers in the DR Congo and Cote d'Ivoire. These weapons are subject to USG concurrence to be transferred (by gift or sale) to the Beninese. If these weapons are not transferred with the M113s, the equipment will not pass UN standards for peacekeeping operations.

¶4. (U) In addition to changes in peacekeeping support, the Belgian government has started billing Benin for continued equipment maintenance and training, particularly for four helicopters which were purchased from Italy by Belgium for the Beninese armed forces. Until now, Belgium has maintained the helicopters while also training pilots and maintenance engineers. While they are still ready to offer technical support, they would like to see the Beninese assume costs for these programs. Belgium plans to continue their annual bilateral airborne training exercise and their biennial regional exercise.

KNIGHT